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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

The ISR Regiment:

The New Eyes and Ears for Shaping the MAGTF Commander's Battlespace

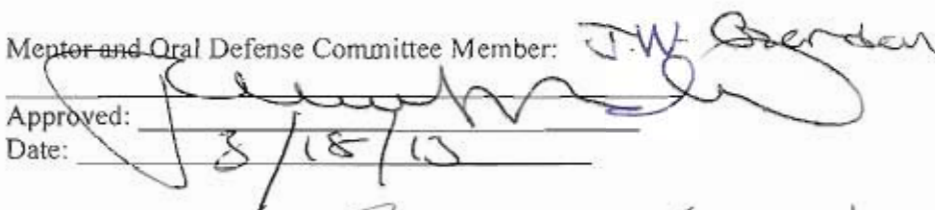
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Executive Summary

Title: The ISR Regiment: Operationally Shaping the Battelspace for the MAGTF Commander

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Thesis: Fusing current collections assets from across the Marine Division and MEF into task organized and deployable detachments under Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Regimental commands can increase efficiencies while decreasing costs, rise to meet the upcoming doctrinal requirements that the Service has dictated, and provide a standardized product that fills the vacuum created by MARSOC.

Discussion: The Marine Corps' Reconnaissance program was born out of a necessity for the MAGTF commander to gain situational awareness of his battlefield, and bred on innovation and adaptation, but as the Service has endured the "Long War," misemployment and supported commander confusion have become its hallmarks. Unfortunately, many of the units within these functional areas are compartmentalized, scattered or disorganized, preventing any standardization or cohesive contribution to the commander on the ground. This problem has been further exacerbated by the advent of the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and the removal of reconnaissance and collections capabilities at the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level.

Conclusion: In order to generate the efficiencies and synergy that USSOCOM and MARSOC have produced as national-level forces, a restructuring and focusing of organic Marine assets needs to occur. MAGTF commanders require a SOF-like capability resident within the Marine Corps that will not fall under the auspices and tasking authority of USSOCOM. The creation of an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Regiment within the MEF command structure will bring an unprecedented level of collections collaboration and battlespace responsiveness to the MAGTF commander. This proposed organization would establish an efficient, synergistic and unified effort of Service-wide Reconnaissance that could meet the expectations of 21st century reconnaissance doctrine and MAGTF commander requirements, while filling the vacuum that MARSOC has created.

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“ISR must be controlled at the right headquarters to get commanders the information and intelligence needed to make decisions on a decentralized counterinsurgency battlefield.”¹

– Lieutenant General Raymond T. Odierno

Introduction

Understanding both the enemy and the operational environment are two critical requirements a commander must gain and maintain in order to achieve success within the battlespace. A responsive and task organized Marine Reconnaissance unit should be able to do just that. In carrying out each of the Marine Corps’ seven types of major operations: Offensive, Defensive, Stability, Counterinsurgency, Reconnaissance/Security, Sustainment, and Other Tactical Operations, appropriately designed and employed reconnaissance forces are a necessary ingredient.² The Marine Corps’ Reconnaissance program was born out of a necessity for the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commander to gain situational awareness of his battlefield, and bred on innovation and adaptation, but as the Service has endured the “Long War,” misemployment and supported commander confusion have become its hallmarks. With its explosion in growth during the first decade of the 21st century, the Marine Corps has proactively expanded its capabilities to collect and report on the battlespace and the enemy. Unfortunately, many of the units within these functional areas are compartmentalized, scattered or disorganized, preventing any standardization or cohesive contribution to the commander on the ground. This problem has been further exacerbated by the advent of the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), which subsequently removed deep-ground reconnaissance and collections capabilities from the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). With MARSOC’s operational departure to the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the

Marine Corps gravely miscalculated both its ideas of operational control and accessibility to MARSOC forces. A total overhaul of the current intelligence, collections and reconnaissance architecture of the Marine Corps is the answer. Fusing current collections assets from across the Marine Division and MEF into task organized and deployable detachments under Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Regimental commands can increase efficiencies while decreasing costs, rise to meet the upcoming doctrinal requirements that the Service has dictated, and provide a standardized product that fills the vacuum created by MARSOC.

Context

“The term *Reconnaissance* describes any mission- aerial, ground, or amphibious- undertaken to obtain, by visual or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of the enemy or to secure data on the meteorological, hydrographic or geographic characteristics of a particular area.”³ Reconnaissance allows the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commander to develop situational awareness of the battlespace and support his operational decision-making process while gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy. Reconnaissance, whether manned or unmanned, also plays a significant role in satisfying the Commander’s Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs). Well-employed reconnaissance can shape or collect on the commander’s areas of interest, areas of influence and areas of operations, successfully synchronizing actions within theater into a cohesive effort.

Varying requirements of the MAGTF against the Range of Military Operations (ROMO) necessitate commanders to define their battlespace. The battlespace may be divided by numerous methods, with *deep*, *close* or *rear* operations in a more conventional conflict, or they may be defined by *shaping*, *decisive* and *sustainment* operations in an unconventional campaign or

operations other than war.⁴ Gaining access to the battlespace by reconnaissance elements is best accomplished through an “outside-in” approach focused on three methods: *Access Operations*, *Maneuver Operations* and *Target Operations*.⁵

Access Operations utilize shaping actions, both lethal and non-lethal, to provide the “ability to project military force into an operational area with sufficient freedom of action to accomplish the mission.”⁶ Operational access, in the face of ever increasing Anti-Access and Area-Denial (A2AD) opposition, “is the joint force contribution to assured access, the unhindered national use of the global commons and select sovereign territory, waters, airspace and cyberspace.”⁷ Access Operations, from a National Strategic perspective, are not necessarily always the clandestine or forced entry capability on foreign soil, but many times rely on conditions set through multi-national exercises, security cooperation operations and overseas bases. Preparing the operational environment in advance of forces should be the focus of Access Oriented Reconnaissance Operations. These evolutions may include: deception, destruction of enemy capabilities, or efforts to influence the enemy, allies or the populace.

Maneuver Operations, specifically Reconnaissance Maneuver, “allow the [MAGTF] commander to set conditions for the movement and maneuver of the force, coordination and control of fires, and the collection of intelligence about the objective area.”⁸ These conditions may be set through a variety of methods, from beach landing site and aircraft surveys, to route assessments and supporting arms observation and control.

The persistent surveillance by personnel on the ground of a targeted area or objective in order to collect and gain intelligence about it falls into the category of *Target Operations*. These efforts can provide both human and real-time dimensions to collections for the commander in order to shape and inform his decision making process. Target Operations may be ongoing

throughout the ROMO, or may be dedicated to pre and post-strike evolutions.

Reconnaissance support to Access, Maneuver and Target Operations align themselves with the time continuum of operational planning and execution. Access oriented operations influence Plans and Future Operations, while Target Operations favor supporting the Maneuver Commander at the execution and Current Operations level. Maneuver oriented operations bridge the two, falling within Future and Current Operations lanes.

History

Major Dion Williams, a Marine Officer at the turn of the 20th century, is credited with transforming the amorphous concept of “Amphibious Reconnaissance” into Naval doctrine. This doctrine would capture both reconnaissance-related intelligence gathering and planning for “Bays, Harbors, and Adjacent Country.”⁹ Experiences in World War I led Williams to redefine his writings on the subject and he published a second edition of *Naval Reconnaissance* in 1917. Of particular note in this visionary document is his emphasis of Amphibious Reconnaissance in both peacetime (Access Oriented) and pre-assault (Advanced Force Operations) capacities that is applicable to emerging 21st century doctrine.

“The object of the naval reconnaissance of any given locality is to acquire all of the information concerning the sea, land, air and material resources of that locality, with a view to its use by the Navy in peace and war, and to record this information that it may be most readily available for: the preparation of plans for the occupation of the locality as a temporary or permanent naval base; the preparation of plans for the sea and land defense of the locality when used as such a base; or the preparation of plans for the attack of the locality by sea and land should it be in possession of an enemy.”¹⁰

Although lauded as a useful innovation, it was not until 1933 and the creation of the Fleet Marine Force that Amphibious Reconnaissance became a reality for the two Services. The Fleet Marine Force, established by Headquarters Marine Corps, united the Navy and the Marine Corps

into an integrated amphibious assault force. Standards written to codify this new union ensued, and Fleet Training Publication 167 *Landing Operations Doctrine* was published in 1938, which incorporated Williams' previous contributions to Amphibious Reconnaissance.¹¹ Now that the demand signal for this new operational capability had been established, the Marine Corps had to develop a manpower, training and equipment model to answer it.

The first multi-Service attempt at ground and amphibious reconnaissance was undertaken with the "Observer Group" during the 1941 preparation for World War II's Operation Torch in North Africa. The Observer Group began with twenty-four highly trained operators from the Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps. Even during this embryonic stage, there was a common understanding that *collectors* (reconnaissance operators), *enablers* (radio/intelligence providers) and *analysts* (production and analysis personnel) are best task organized as a cohesive team with unity of effort. Marine Corps participants of the Observer Group were drawn from the 1st Infantry Division (*collectors*), the 5th Marine Battalion Intelligence Section (*enablers*) and Regimental/Division Intelligence Sections (*analysts*).¹² The Observer Group became the precursor to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Underwater Demolition Teams, and Army Special Forces, as the Army and Navy/Marine Corps elements split apart in August of 1942.

Marine Reconnaissance, as organized for the MAGTF, can trace its lineage back to January 1943 and the splitting up of the Observer Group.¹³ The Pacific Theater employed these newly established units as platoons, in order to provide the landing force commander with pre D-Day reconnaissance and obstacle reduction of potential beach landing sites, reporting on enemy fortifications, and limited battelspace shaping operations. Within two years an Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion was formed, farming out its platoons and companies to various MAGTF commanders in need throughout the theater. This was the first reconnaissance effort in

Marine history to be task organized and specifically trained to provide pre-assault conformation of the Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs). These units did not have the robust communications and intelligence enabling capability that they do today, but they afforded the MAGTF commander specialized insertion techniques and a human dimension to reconnaissance reporting; two critical elements that remain consistent in today's operations. Unfortunately, as World War II drew to a close, many of Amphibious Reconnaissance units were disbanded with only some remnants remaining within the Marine Division architecture.

The Korean War, and the introduction of the helicopter as a combat transport platform, prompted the Marine Corps to explore new and innovative methods of reconnaissance insertion and employment. The concept of Deep Reconnaissance sparked the formation of the Marine Corps Test Unit #1 in 1954 at Camp Pendleton, California.¹⁴ The newly formed unit was designed for specialized tactics, techniques and insertion capabilities in the burgeoning Cold War Era, with one platoon of parachutists and one platoon of pathfinders. As the Marine Corps Test Unit #1 evolved in the first 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and broke from its Division Reconnaissance trusses, it brought to light an issue that the modern Corps has fallen back into; a lack of responsive intelligence collections to the commander. The advent of the Force Reconnaissance Company streamlined the flow of intelligence from collector-to-analyst-to-commander, by eliminating middlemen at the Battalion, Division and Regimental levels.

By 1958, the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company was split in half, with half remaining at Camp Pendleton, and the other half transferred to Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. The West Coast reconnaissance units would provide support to the Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPac), and the East Coast units would provide support to the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (FMFLant). Division and Force Reconnaissance elements were utilized during both the Vietnam War and the

Persian Gulf War to build an intelligence-supported picture of the battlefield from behind enemy lines, perform specialized raids, and shaping of the battlespace through host-nation force engagement and fire support operations.

Modern Reconnaissance

A marked turning point for the Marine Corps' reconnaissance units began with the creation of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), or MEU (SOC) program in 1985, and the Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group (SRIG) in 1987, at each MEF.¹⁵ The MEU (SOC) became the Marine Corps' expeditionary/amphibious ethos personified, and provided the nation with a pre-positioned contingency response force. Due to its rapid responsiveness in the face of unexpected crises, MEUs required Special Operations Force (SOF)-type capabilities along with the necessary intelligence support in place to allow access to the battlespace or area of interest. This SOF-like capability is an enduring requirement for today's operating MEUs, but a miscalculation in who would control Marine SOF has created a gap in specialized skill sets. This will be discussed in length further in the paper.

General Alfred M. Gray, the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps and a former enlisted Reconnaissance Marine, recognized the need for integrated intelligence and reconnaissance efforts under one unified command within the MEF. The SRIG was an attempt at recreating the Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center, circa 1969, which had been so effective at supporting III Marine Amphibious Force's operations in Vietnam.¹⁶ The new SRIG was tasked with providing "surveillance, reconnaissance, intelligence, counterintelligence, electronic warfare, air and naval gunfire liaison, tactical deception, maritime direct action and secure communications to MAGTFs."¹⁷ The SRIG fused together a Force Reconnaissance Company, an Air Naval

Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), a Radio Battalion, a remotely piloted aircraft unit and an Intelligence Battalion (see Figure 1). The SRIG was commanded by a Colonel (O-6), and at full strength numbered around 2,400 Marines and Sailors. The SRIG was structured to provide scalable ISR support for various MAGTFs ranging in size from MEU to MEF. A typical SRIG MEU detachment could bring 11 Officers and 97 Enlisted in a self-contained, flexible and task organized assembly of intelligence, collections, and direct action.

The SRIG afforded the MAGTF commander a multi-sourced information gathering force, to include: interrogation, counter-intelligence, imagery interpretation, topographic interpretation, tactical deception, Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison, signals intelligence, remotely piloted vehicles, and force reconnaissance/direct action.¹⁸ Although a model of innovation and synergy, squabbles began between the intelligence and the operations communities as to who should have operational control of these assets and whether Intelligence or Infantry Officers should have command.¹⁹ These disputes eventually boiled over in 1997 with the unraveling of the SRIG for reapportionment across the MEF Command Element in each of its functional areas; intelligence, radio and reconnaissance. The SRIG was a concept ahead of its time, but its lessons learned paved the way for the 2011 introduction of the Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officer Necessary Military Occupational Specialty (0307 NMOS).²⁰ This is the Marine Corps' version of the ISR Officer, capable of commanding the fusion of intelligence and infantry skill sets, into a unified collections and shaping effort.

MARSOC

As USSOCOM began to take shape in 1986, then Commandant General Paul X. Kelley understood the dynamic that donating forces to this new structure would certainly be at the

expense of the Fleet Marine Force.²¹ Although SOF efforts across the ROMO had been extremely effective, yielding tremendous returns with a cost-effective force that bore little footprint in politically sensitive operations, the Marine Corps' sentiments rang consistent: an elite unit within an elite Service is not needed.²² By the fall of 2001 however, there became a clear demand signal from the Department of Defense that the Marine Corps needed to make a significant investment as a Service to USSOCOM.²³ The Marine Corps ceded this well-intentioned parochialism for two reasons: watching their crisis-response forces (15th and 26th MEUs) sidelined to SOF units during the opening stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, and a directive from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on how the Corps and USSOCOM could work more closely in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).^{24,25}

Although regarded as the Nation's "911 Force," the first on-scene MEUs lacked the authorities to deploy their organic ISR assets in support of resistant SOF Commanders and floated helplessly by as USSOCOM units were brought to bear on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces. "Even when these and later Marine units did make it ashore, they were most often employed piece-meal in supporting roles to provide capabilities that SOF were deficient in or lacked altogether."²⁶ By October of 2002, Marine Commandant James L. Jones was directing Marine Corps senior leaders to "develop a plan to provide forces to the Special Operations Command on a permanent basis in order to cement the relationship of our two organizations at the institutional level and provide our nation with an expanded special operations capability."²⁷ The result of this development was the Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment 1 (MCSOCOM Det 1), with its charter as the proof-of-concept for cementing the relationship between the Service and the Component Command.²⁸

MCSOCOM Det 1 deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom under a Naval Special Warfare Task Group, conducting direct action, coalition support and battlespace shaping mission with great success, but their most unique contribution to the SOF community was in their structure.²⁹ With just under 90 Marines and Sailors, the common misconception was that the preponderance of this new unit was a Ranger-like strike force of Force Reconnaissance Marines, but operators made up less than one third (24 of 86) of the force structure (see Figure 2).³⁰ Early in its development, Marine Corps planners recognized that the defining element that would set MCSOCOM Det 1 apart from its SOF peers was its organic enabler capability.³¹ The Detachment brought robust command and control, intelligence, and communications attachments (*enablers*) with its ranks of “trigger pullers” (*collectors*), and were capabilities that other SOF units were borrowing to be successful in theater.³² With a successful tour in Iraq, the Detachment 1 proof-of-concept paved the way for an enduring Marine Service component command that would now join the ranks of the Army’s (USASOC), Air Force’s (AFSOC) and Navy’s (NSW) special operations commands.

Activated in February 2006, the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) was a big, but deleterious leap in ISR for the Marine Corps. The new organization required immediate staffing goals to be met as it prepared for looming worldwide deployments, most notably in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.³³ Marine Corps leadership falsely anticipated that MARSOC units aboard MEUs could leverage the MAGTF into Theater Special Operation Command (TSOC) directed operations. To meet their structural requirements, the Marine Corps disbanded both 1st and 2nd Force Reconnaissance Companies and absorbed these personnel into the newly enacted 1st and 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalions (MSOBs). In doing so, the MEF lost its deep ground reconnaissance assets, but hoped that the initial outlay

would pay dividends when Marine Special Operations Companies (MSOCs) were put aboard the MEUs. This common-law marriage of MEUs and MSOCs lasted for only two deployments, the 26th MEU in 2007, and the 13th MEU in 2008, until the Operational Control (OPCON) of MARSOC units by the TSOCs began to surface as a point of contention between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM. What MARSOC did correctly however, was listen to the lessons learned of their predecessors. Modeled after MCSOCOM Det 1, MARSOC designed its deployable units to have the same organic enabler capabilities that USSOCOM saw as the real selling point of the Detachment. MSOCs deployed with reconnaissance-like operators (*collectors*) and the same robust selection of intelligence, counter-intelligence and communications specialists (*enablers* and *analysts*) that the Detachment once did. Thus far, the MSOCs and MSOBs have been wildly successful in their integration with USSOCOM and their competence in executing missions.

In the last several years, the MEFs have been somewhat effective in reconstituting their Force Reconnaissance Companies from within the Division Reconnaissance Battalions, offering a tenuous but workable solution of OPCON to the MEF, but administratively controlled (ADCON) to their parent battalions. The gamble of Force Reconnaissance Companies for MSOCs aboard the MEUs has not paid off, and has left the Corps in a dangerous predicament. The time is ripe for the development of a SOF-like capability resident within the arsenal of the Marine Corps that can not only fill the vacuum created by MARSOC, but also restore the authorities and entitlements that are deserved of the Nation's emergency response force, the MEU. In December of 2011, the Deputy Commandant of Plans, Policies and Operations (DC, PP&O), through Ground Board 2-11, identified that "there is a specific lack of direction/guidance for development, certification and integration of ground reconnaissance elements into MAGTF- level ISR and non-kinetic shaping operations."³⁴

The Ground Board recommended the following:

- “1. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISR-E) expanded to guide a combined arms approach to intelligence collection and shaping operations in support of future kinetic and non-kinetic expeditionary operations.
2. Marine reconnaissance elements integrated into a MAGTF ISR solution to enhance global coverage by utilizing ground reconnaissance elements during Phase-0 operations.”³⁵

The Proposal

In order to generate the efficiencies and synergy that USSOCOM and MARSOC have produced as national-level forces, a restructuring and focusing of organic Marine assets needs to occur. MAGTF commanders require a SOF-like capability resident within the Marine Corps that will not fall under the auspices and tasking authority of USSOCOM. The creation of an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Regiment within the MEF command structure will bring an unprecedented level of collections collaboration and battlespace responsiveness to the MAGTF commander. This proposed organization would establish an efficient, synergistic and unified effort of Service-wide Reconnaissance that could meet the expectations of 21st century reconnaissance doctrine and MAGTF commander requirements, while filling the vacuum that MARSOC has created. Once this fusion of currently stove-piped reconnaissance and collections efforts is complete, it would generate a cost savings for the Marine Corps in a fiscally constrained environment. Undeveloped in other services, except at USSOCOM and its components, an ISR Regiment will bring the Marine Corps to the cutting edge of organically employed, interdisciplinary collections accompanied by SOF-like skill sets.

For the ISR Regiment to be a more effective tool for the commander than the current task organization and structure, it has to provide definitive and critical inputs to both the Intelligence Cycle and the Intelligence Functions in a “one-stop-shop” manner, thus producing both synergy and a unified effort. The Intelligence Cycle includes: Planning and Direction, Collection, Processing/Exploitation/Production of Intelligence, Dissemination, and Utilization.³⁶ It is the systematic process by which “information is planned for, obtained, assembled, converted through analysis into intelligence, provided to decision-makers, and ultimately used in making decisions.”³⁷ The six Intelligence Functions equip the force for weaving intelligence requirements into the planning, execution and decision-making process of MAGTF operations. The six Functions include: Supporting the Commander’s Estimate, Developing the Situation, Providing Indications and Warnings (I&W), Supporting Force Protection, Supporting Targeting, and Supporting Combat Assessment. Supporting the Commander’s Estimate and Developing the Situation leverage ISR capabilities to define and “shape” the battlespace during the IPB process and continue to update the commander as the operations unfolds. I&W and Supporting Force Protection utilize ISR resources in the defense of friendly units and assets prior to, and during the conduct of the operation. Targeting and Combat Assessment Support both rely on ISR capabilities to provide accurate and timely feedback on critical enemy nodes and the MAGTF’s effects on these nodes through battle damage assessments (BDA).

As the Marine Division serves in a predominantly “force provider” capacity, and the MEF as the operational “employer,” the ISR Regiment can best be structured as a subordinate to the MEF Command Element. Reconnaissance capabilities lie within most of the MAGTF elements, but the ISR Regiment will focus on the conduct of Advanced Force Operations (AFO), and ground and amphibious reconnaissance at the operational level. Subordinate elements of the

Regiment will collect and produce tactical intelligence, but as this intelligence is made available to commanders at higher echelons, it may serve operational and strategic purposes.

Collections and reconnaissance efforts within the MEF and the Division are provided by six entities: Radio Battalions, Intelligence Battalions, Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, Reconnaissance Battalions, Force Reconnaissance Companies, and Infantry Battalion Scout/Sniper Platoons. Each one of these units has been developed, equipped and tasked to either answer information requirements, or shape the battlespace for the MAGTF commander, but they all reside in separate and unrelated commands. The ISR Regiment will fuse critical skill sets from the Radio, Intelligence, and Reconnaissance Battalions with the Force Reconnaissance Companies into a force-multiplying and synergistic unified command structure. Light Armored Reconnaissance and Scout/Sniper Platoons will remain intact and within the Marine Divisions.

The Radio Battalion, currently organic to the Command Element within the MEF, provides “ground based signals intelligence (SIGINT), electronic warfare, communications security monitoring, and special intelligence communications capabilities.”³⁸ It’s Radio Reconnaissance Platoons and Teams (RRP/RRT) support the six intelligence functions through indications and warnings (I&W) and unique specialized signals collections beyond the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA), that support both force protection and enemy assessment.

The Intelligence Battalion, subordinate to the MEF Command Element, hosts Production, Analysis, Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and Counter-Intelligence Companies. Its Ground Sensor Platoons and Imagery Interpretation elements can emplace, collect, and interpret sensor information and produce Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) and Measurement and Signals Intelligence (MASINT) for the MAGTF.

The Force Reconnaissance Company, once part of the MEF Command Element, is the deep, ground and amphibious reconnaissance, surveillance, and specialized raid force for the MAGTF commander. Task organized into platoons, the company has the ability to conduct: ground, amphibious, and underwater reconnaissance and surveillance, as well as AFO, specialized raids, post-strike analysis, sensor operations, initial terminal guidance (ITG) and counter-reconnaissance, all through specialized insertion and extraction. Force reconnaissance elements provide a special operations capability that MAGTF commanders can utilize as a base element and build upon to provide a wide range of ISR capabilities (i.e. with the addition of ground sensor units or radio recon elements). The Reconnaissance Battalions, currently having administrative control (ADCON) of the Force Reconnaissance Companies, can provide many of the same capabilities as the Force Reconnaissance Companies, but the skills sets are not resident in every platoon and company.

Those principles crucial to intelligence operations easily lend themselves to the creation of an ISR Regiment; primarily that intelligence operations require centralized management and that it must be tailored and timely. It is without argument that intelligence drives MAGTF operations and that intelligence should be focused downward, but the current model of operating can be enhanced and improved. Centralized management allows for a unified command to train, equip and employ ISR capabilities. “Good intelligence is the result of the integration of many separate and specialized collection, processing and analytical resources.”³⁹ Regimental tasks will include the command and control and/or employment of: advanced force operations, underwater reconnaissance, amphibious reconnaissance, ground reconnaissance, surveillance, battlespace shaping, specialized and limited scale raids, and foreign internal defense or unconventional warfare.

The term *Advanced Force Operations*, or AFO, has been traditionally reserved for Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) units conducting Operational Preparation of the Battlespace (OPB), which follows its precursor, Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB). USSOCOM defines OPB as “Non-intelligence activities conducted prior to D-Day, H-Hour, in likely or potential areas of employment, to train and prepare for follow-on military operations.”⁴⁰ For the ISR Regiment model, the term AFO will include any reconnaissance efforts (aerial, underwater, amphibious or ground) in support of AFO, as well as the pre-assault seizure of key objectives and providing terminal guidance and/or post-strike analysis for offensive air strikes.

Underwater Reconnaissance is defined by the MCWP 2-25 as “the collection and reporting of information concerning the hydrographic characteristics of a particular area, well in advance of an amphibious landing force.”⁴¹ Underwater Reconnaissance conducted by elements of the ISR Regiment could provide support across the MAGTF spectrum from the tactical to the operational level, and would not be limited to supporting only amphibious landing forces.

A similar, but unique mission set is the capability to conduct Amphibious Reconnaissance for the MAGTF commander. Amphibious Reconnaissance includes the: “discovering, clarifying, or confirming of information concerning the hydrography, topography, and enemy activities or resources in a coastal area, well in advance of an amphibious landing force.”⁴² MAGTF-focused Amphibious Reconnaissance requires the ISR Regiment to provide both coastal and riverine capabilities, as well as initial and/or confirmatory beach reconnaissance, and terminal guidance to landing craft.

Ground Reconnaissance will make up the preponderance of ISR Regiment capabilities

and mission sets. It will include: Area, Zone, Route and Force Oriented Reconnaissance missions to obtain information about the terrain and enemy in: areas, defined zones, lines of communication, or specified organizations, respectively.

Surveillance, or the “systematic observation of aerospace, surface, or subsurface areas, places, persons, or things; by visual, aural, electronic, photographic, or other means” will build critical situational awareness for the MAGTF commander to inform his operational and intelligence decision-making cycles.⁴³ Former Radio, Intelligence, and Reconnaissance Battalion capabilities will gain synergistic effects under the ISR Regiment as they are fused to provide: Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) and Measurement and Signals Intelligence (MASINT) in support of MAGTF Surveillance operations. HUMINT can bring the commander “insight into intangible factors such as tactics, training, morale and combat effectiveness that cannot be collected by technical means.”⁴⁴ IMINT related surveillance operations by ISR Regimental elements can provide both aerial and “ground-perspective imagery, in near real time, in inclement weather, and that can defeat the effects of enemy camouflage, cover, and deception activities.”⁴⁵ The fusion of former MASINT providers within the Intelligence Battalion, with those that emplace MASINT instruments within the Reconnaissance Battalion, will bring a new level of ground sensor capabilities to the MAGTF commander.

The ISR Regiment will be able to employ forces in support of shaping the battlespace for the MAGTF commander. Battlespace Shaping includes “the employment of direct fire weapons, demolitions, indirect fires, precision-guided munitions, and naval fires in order to destroy or neutralize enemy forces.”⁴⁶ The ISR Regiment will harness the capabilities of Intelligence and Reconnaissance units to shape the commander’s battlespace through: terminal guidance, forward

observation, and battle-damage assessment (BDA) of MAGTF fires, and/or conducting anti-safe haven hunter-killer operations. Hunter-killer missions as defined by Joseph D. Celeski in the Joint Special Operation University Report 10-1, are: “prolonged operations conducted in irregular warfare by a unique and specifically organized force, in conjunction with and indigenous force, against irregular warfare adversaries by operating behind the lines or in hostile, safe-haven, or semi-permissive environments, employing unorthodox tactics, for the sole purpose of achieving attrition and punitive actions predominantly against the personnel, leadership, and resources of the enemy.”⁴⁷

Specialized Limited Scale Raids conducted by ISR Regiment elements will provide the MAGTF commander the ability to swiftly penetrate “hostile territory to secure information, to confuse the enemy, to destroy installations, or for a specific purpose other than holding terrain.”⁴⁸ The execution of raids can span the range of MAGTF operations from shaping to sustaining, as well as the ROMO. Due to the specialized nature of these raids, MAGTF commanders have been unable to task assigned conventional Marine Corps forces, or have had to source externally through USSOCOM. The ISR Regiment will not only provide the requisite forces for the conduct of these limited scale raids, but its enabler detachments will deliver an enhanced capability for internal planning and collections.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) or Unconventional Warfare (UW), missions dictated by the nature of the conflict, will round out the skill sets that the ISR Regiment will afford commanders. MAGTF operations, especially at the MEU echelon of force capability, are frequently directed to bolster developing ally nations with FID assignments. Unconventional Warfare, or the subversion of a foreign government, should also be a capability that the Marine Corps can provide to the Department of Defense in time of crisis.

The ISR Regiment will provide these eight directed capabilities in task organized and tailor-able detachments to support the reconnaissance needs of various MAGTF commanders. The Regiment will be task organized to command, control and deploy ISR capabilities at the MEF level, while ISR Companies can be specifically employed to provide reconnaissance needs for the MEU commander. Scalable ISR Detachments can be organized from within the Regiment to cover the spectrum of the MAGTF amalgamations in between as needed (see Figures 3a-c).

Conclusion

As then Major Wade Priddy, the former Operations Officer for MSOCOM Det 1, wrote in his unit's lessons learned: "If we create one-dimensional units with reconnaissance Marines under one commander, fire supporters under another, intel professionals under another, and logisticians under yet another, and no staff or communications systems capable of developing and coordinating a coherent plan, we will duplicate instead of complement existing SOF and marginalize the capability of the contribution."⁴⁹ The critical services that the ISR Regiment will generate are threefold.

First, the Regiment will create a synergistic and unified command of currently stove-piped collections and intelligence agencies into a modular and scalable organization of *collectors*, *enablers*, and *analysts*. Numerous historical examples of successful reconnaissance and collections units such as the Observer Group, the SRIG, MCSOCOM Det 1 and MARSOC, have illustrated that effective intelligence must be multi-dimensional with unity of effort and command. Human and automated collectors, coupled with enablers and analysts within the same organization are recipes for success. With the 2011 advent of the Expeditionary Ground

Reconnaissance Officer NMOS, the Marine Corps now has a fusion of intelligence and operational capabilities resident in one school-trained leader. This keeps the leadership of this new organization within the existing Marine Corps Task Organization and has MOS creditability.

Second, the Regiment will yield a standardized intelligence product for the MAGTF commander from across the spectrum of disciplines, something that has been unable to be accomplished in the Marine Corps' intelligence community. Currently, Radio Battalions, Intelligence Battalions, Recon Battalions and Force Reconnaissance Companies have all worked off of different templates and intelligence formats. Bringing these collections departments under "one roof" allows for standardization across the disciplines.

Third, we will fill the vacuum that MARSOC has created with an enabled, SOF-like capacity that is resident within the Marine Corps. The GCE (Division) is unlikely to do unilateral missions without the MAGTF, besides exploitation of their battlespace. Battlespace owners have misused reconnaissance assets, either as purely raid forces or provisional infantry units. They will likely participate as part of a MAGTF. The MAGTF is the base element for Access Oriented Operations. The ISR Regiment, trained, equipped and certified, creates a capability on the MEU to gain authorities to conduct AFO. The current geometry in the Marine Corps does not meet the Nation's requirements. The 2-11 Ground Board, along with the Marine Corps' Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations (DC PP&O), stated that Marine Reconnaissance should be focused on Phase 0 through 2 operations, which includes AFO.⁵⁰ The MEFs are now realizing that the current collections template under the MEF and Division cannot provide the capability that they need. The Amphibious Capabilities Working Group of 2011 came to similar conclusions:

“For the Marine Corps to remain relevant beyond OEF as well as in the face of severe fiscal constraints, the service must embrace this combined arms approach to intelligence collection and shaping operations in support of future kinetic and non-kinetic expeditionary operations. This approach will allow the MAGTF commander to directly focus and task an ISR organization to meet current and future advance force requirements by gaining access to the environment, assessing, and shaping the battle space until follow-on forces arrive.”⁵¹

In order for the Marine Corps to achieve this end-state, there needs to be an operationalized command for reconnaissance and collections. The creation of an ISR Regiment, able to work within the Phase 0 through Phase 2 of the ROMO, will give MEF commanders the time and space to define what MAGTF to employ when crises arise.

Figure 1: Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group (SRIG)

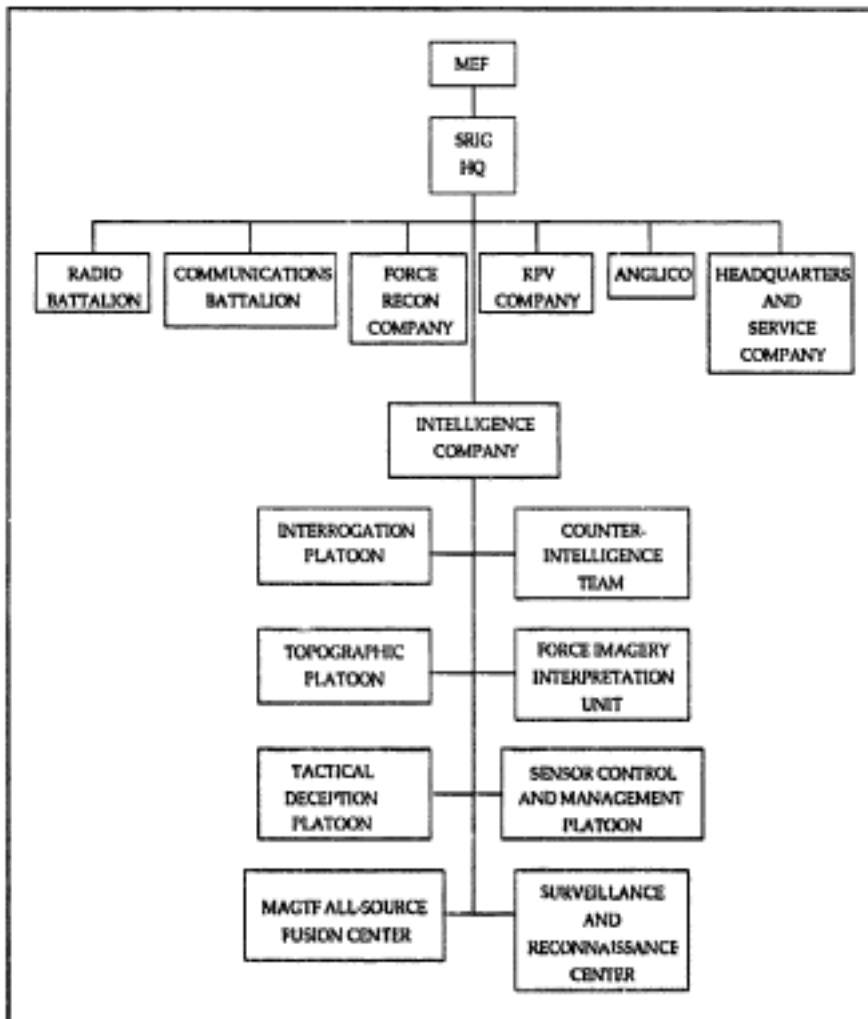


Figure 2: Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment 1 (MCSOCOM Det 1)

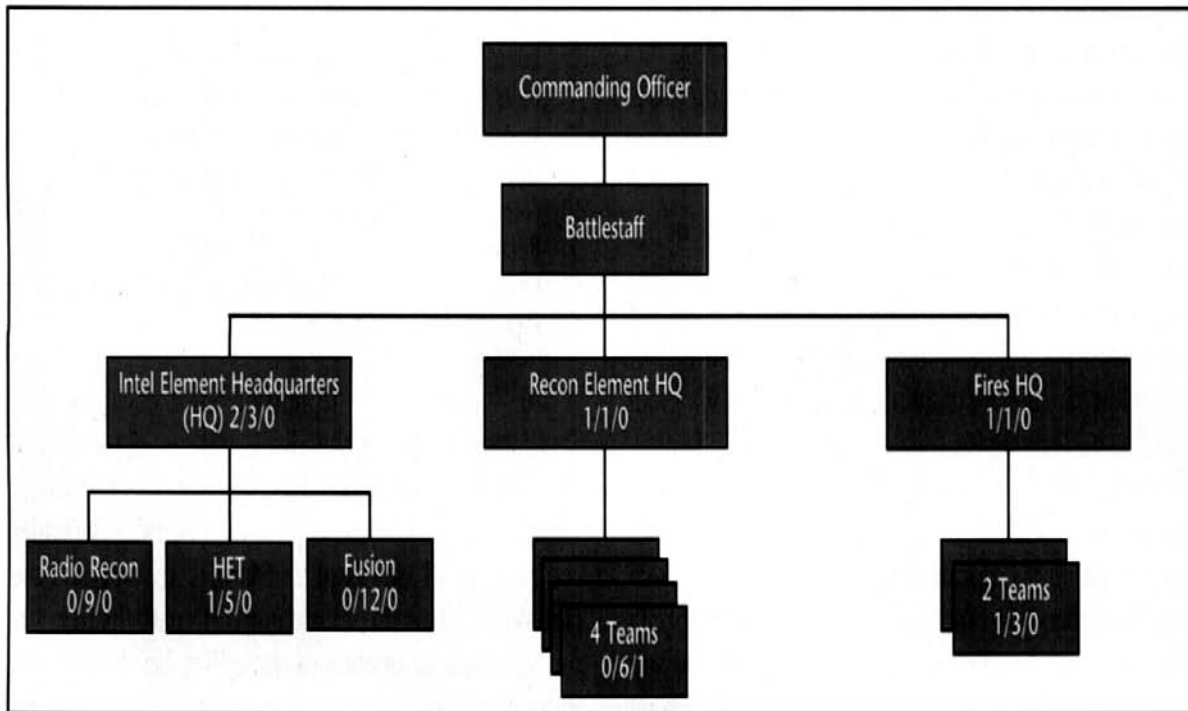


Figure 3a: I Marine Expeditionary Force ISR Regiment (example)



Figure 3b: 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit ISR Combat Element



(example)

Figure 3c: ISR Regiment Organization



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- ¹ Raymond T. Odierno, Nichoel E. Brooks, and Francesco P. Mastracchio, "ISR Evolution in the Iraqi Theater," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 50 (3rd Quarter 2008): 52.
- ² Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Operations*, MCDP 1-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, August 9, 2011), Chapter 6.
- ³ Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations (Final Draft)*, MCWP 2-25 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, July 2, 2012), 38. Cited hereafter as "MCWP 2-25."
- ⁴ MCWP 2-25, 33.
- ⁵ MCWP 2-25, 34.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)*, Version 1.0, January 17, 2012, 1.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, i.
- ⁸ MCWP 2-25, 34.
- ⁹ Dion Williams, *Naval Reconnaissance: Instructions for the Reconnaissance of Bays, Harbors, and Adjacent Country* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906).
- ¹⁰ Dion Williams, *Naval Reconnaissance: Instructions for the Reconnaissance of Bays, Harbors, and Adjacent Country, (2nd Edition)* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1917).
- ¹¹ Office of Naval Operations Fleet Training Division, United States Navy, *Fleet Training Publication 167; Landing Operations Doctrine* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, 1938).
- ¹² Col Bruce F. Meyers (USMC Ret), *Swift, Silent, and Deadly: Marine Amphibious Reconnaissance in the Pacific 1942-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 4.
- ¹³ Col Bruce F. Meyers (USMC Ret), *Fortune Favors the Brave – The Story of First Force Recon* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 1. Cited hereafter as "Meyers, 'Fortune'".
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.
- ¹⁵ Edwin H. Simmons, *The United States Marines: A History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 20-22.
- ¹⁶ Meyers, "Fortune," 244.
- ¹⁷ Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group*, FMFM 3-22 (Quantico, VA: MCCDC, 1991), 1-5.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-35.
- ¹⁹ Meyers, "Fortune," 248.
- ²⁰ MARADMIN 650-11, Assignment of Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officer Necessary Military Occupational Specialty.
- ²¹ Major James W. Eagan, "Has MARSOC Strayed Too Far From Its Initial Role?" (SOF Elective Essay, Marine Corps University, 2013), 2-6. Cited hereafter as "Eagan".
- ²² Eagan, 2-6.
- ²³ Eagan, 2-6.
- ²⁴ Eagan, 2-6.
- ²⁵ Wade Priddy, "Marine Detachment 1," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no. 6 (2006): 58-61. Cited hereafter as "Priddy".
- ²⁶ Priddy, 58-61.
- ²⁷ Commandant of the Marine Corps Message, *First Marine Corps Contribution to the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)*, October 28, 2002.
- ²⁸ Eagan, 2-6.
- ²⁹ Eagan, 2-6.
- ³⁰ Priddy, 58-61.
- ³¹ Eagan, 2-6.
- ³² Eagan, 2-6.
- ³³ Eagan, 2-6.
- ³⁴ Ian Fletcher, *Analysis of the Optimal ISR Alignment to Support Phase 0-3 Operations*, Information Paper (Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Marine Corps, August 2012).
- ³⁵ Ian Fletcher, *Analysis of the Optimal ISR Alignment to Support Phase 0-3 Operations*, Information Paper (Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Marine Corps, August 2012).
- ³⁶ MCWP 2-25, 375.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 374.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁹ Ibid., 376.

⁴⁰ Michael S. Repass, "Combating Terrorism with Preparation of the Battelspace," (Strategy Research Project, Army War College, 2003), 9.

⁴¹ MCWP 2-25, 490.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 491.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 492.

⁴⁷ Joseph D. Celeski, *Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens*, Joint Special Operations University Report 10-1 (Hurlburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2010) 7.

⁴⁸ MCWP 2-25, 492.

⁴⁹ Priddy, 58-61.

⁵⁰ Ground Board 2-11 After Action Report

⁵¹ Ian Fletcher, *Amphibious Capabilities Working Group SOF Inputs*, Information Paper (Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Marine Corps, 2012).

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Figures

Figure 1: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group*, FMFM 3-22 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 1990), 5.

Figure 2: Wade Priddy, "Marine Detachment 1," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no. 6 (2006): 58-61.